



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Jim McDermott
U.S. House of Representatives
1035 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative McDermott:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the safety, security, and comfort implications of the potential for passengers to use mobile voice and wireless communications technology on commercial aircraft. I share your concerns and will not present a final recommendation regarding this issue to my fellow Commissioners until these issues are fully addressed in a collaborative fashion with other appropriate federal agencies. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of that proceeding and considered as part of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) review.

The FCC approved a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)* on December 12, 2013, to consider whether advances in technology no longer warrant – on a technological basis – the prohibition of in-flight mobile wireless services due to concerns about potential interference with terrestrial networks. The *NPRM* represents only the beginning of a process to consider carefully whether and how we should revise our rules to give airlines the ability to allow passengers to use mobile wireless services while flying above 10,000 feet.

Under the proposed rules, there would be several steps required before mobile wireless services could be used aloft: (1) the aircraft would need to seek FCC authorization to utilize the technology that captures a signal and keeps it on the plane so that it does not interfere with terrestrial networks (it is this interference that is the basis of the current prohibition – and if such interference can be eliminated by new onboard technology, the basis for the existing rule is removed); (2) the airline would have to take affirmative steps, beyond the FCC rules, to comply with the requirements of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Department of Transportation (DOT), and any other federal agency asserting jurisdiction; and (3) the airline's own policies would have to be followed.

The *NPRM* makes clear that nothing in the proposal would limit the ability of airlines to ban wireless voice conversations in-flight. For example, an airline could choose not to offer voice service at all but provide only data communications so that passengers could engage in data-focused activities, such as accessing websites, sending and receiving text messages and e-mail, or utilizing social media to stay connected to friends and family. As you know, many airlines offer similar services using Wi-Fi today.

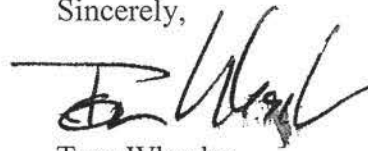
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As the Commission moves forward with our rulemaking proceeding, we will continue to work collaboratively with the federal agencies with appropriate jurisdiction and expertise to help shape policies and rules that best serve the public interest. As I stated previously, the *NPRM* is the beginning of a fact-gathering process, and the views you have shared will be included as part of that process.

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Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Jim McGovern
U.S. House of Representatives
438 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative McGovern:

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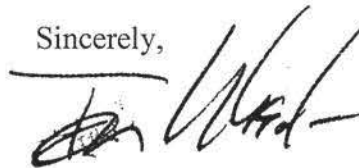
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

October 31, 2014

The Honorable David McKinley
U.S. House of Representatives
412 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative McKinley:

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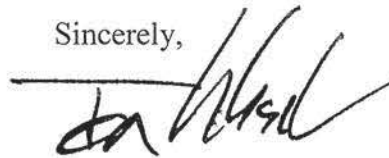
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Patrick Meehan
U.S. House of Representatives
204 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Meehan:

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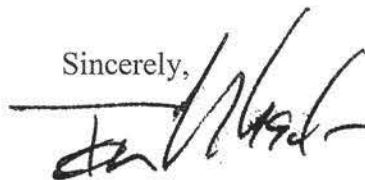
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Michael Michaud
U.S. House of Representatives
1724 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Michaud:

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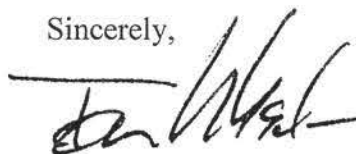
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
U.S. House of Representatives
2110 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Nadler:

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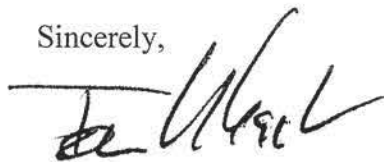
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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OFFICE OF
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October 31, 2014

The Honorable Grace Napolitano
U.S. House of Representatives
1610 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Napolitano:

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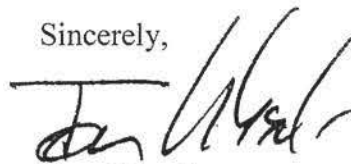
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Rick Nolan
U.S. House of Representatives
2447 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Nolan:

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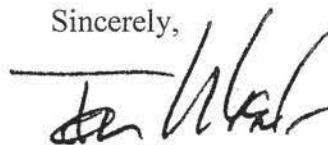
We are in complete agreement on the importance of safety and security aloft, and issued the *NPRM* only after consulting with the relevant federal safety, security and regulatory agencies. In addition, since the purpose of an *NPRM* is to gather facts, we have created a formal input process to examine safety and security matters. This includes a federal multi-stakeholder working group that FCC staff convened to consider national security and safety-related matters related to in-flight wireless services. The working group includes subject matter experts from the DOT, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Justice (DOJ), and other relevant federal agencies. We will continue to coordinate, solicit input, and seek guidance from our federal counterparts on this working group.

We are separately coordinating with the DOT as it appropriately examines whether to ban voice calls aboard aircraft. On March 24, 2014, I wrote Secretary Foxx with a formal submission in the DOT's *Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM)* with respect to the use of cell phones and other mobile devices on aircraft. In the letter, I stated that I, along with several of my colleagues, have expressed concern about use of mobile wireless devices for in-flight voice communications. I stated my support of the overwhelming number of commenters to the FCC's *NPRM* who believe that allowing voice communications on aircraft will be inordinately disruptive to their flying experiences. As a frequent airline passenger, I share this concern and do not want the disruption that could be caused by voice calls on planes.

As the Commission moves forward with our rulemaking proceeding, we will continue to work collaboratively with the federal agencies with appropriate jurisdiction and expertise to help shape policies and rules that best serve the public interest. As I stated previously, the *NPRM* is the beginning of a fact-gathering process, and the views you have shared will be included as part of that process.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
U.S. House of Representatives
2136 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Norton:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the safety, security, and comfort implications of the potential for passengers to use mobile voice and wireless communications technology on commercial aircraft. I share your concerns and will not present a final recommendation regarding this issue to my fellow Commissioners until these issues are fully addressed in a collaborative fashion with other appropriate federal agencies. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of that proceeding and considered as part of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) review.

The FCC approved a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)* on December 12, 2013, to consider whether advances in technology no longer warrant – on a technological basis – the prohibition of in-flight mobile wireless services due to concerns about potential interference with terrestrial networks. The *NPRM* represents only the beginning of a process to consider carefully whether and how we should revise our rules to give airlines the ability to allow passengers to use mobile wireless services while flying above 10,000 feet.

Under the proposed rules, there would be several steps required before mobile wireless services could be used aloft: (1) the aircraft would need to seek FCC authorization to utilize the technology that captures a signal and keeps it on the plane so that it does not interfere with terrestrial networks (it is this interference that is the basis of the current prohibition – and if such interference can be eliminated by new onboard technology, the basis for the existing rule is removed); (2) the airline would have to take affirmative steps, beyond the FCC rules, to comply with the requirements of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Department of Transportation (DOT), and any other federal agency asserting jurisdiction; and (3) the airline's own policies would have to be followed.

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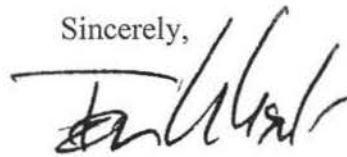
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Beto O'Rourke
U.S. House of Representatives
1721 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative O'Rourke:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the safety, security, and comfort implications of the potential for passengers to use mobile voice and wireless communications technology on commercial aircraft. I share your concerns and will not present a final recommendation regarding this issue to my fellow Commissioners until these issues are fully addressed in a collaborative fashion with other appropriate federal agencies. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of that proceeding and considered as part of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) review.

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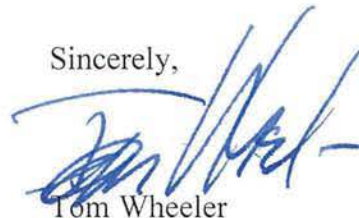
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Tom Wheeler